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THE GREATEST COLEOPTERIST.

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Of all the papers dealing with American Coleopterology far the most important is probably that listed as No. 3 in Henshaw's Bibliography of Leconte, published in the Boston Journal of Natural History, Vol. V, pp. 203–209, and entitled: "Descriptions of Some New and Interesting Insects Inhabiting the United States. By John L. Leconte. Read before the Boston Soc. Nat. Hist., November 6, 1844." It is, in fact, in matters entomological the American Declaration of Independence. Previously scattering species had been recorded by Harris, Ziegler, Hentz, Randall, Leconte, the elder, and during a few years one Thomas Say had violated all precedent by describing his own discoveries without reference to Europe, about 800 species of beetles and rather more in other orders, but this revolutionist had died young after nine years of unhappy expatriation in the wilderness of Indiana, where literature was not. Following his departure the science languished, utterly neglected in New York and Philadelphia, kept alive by a small band in Boston and a handful of local collectors scattered over the country.

One would like to imagine that this paper met with the reception it deserved, that to the faithful score of those who might attend Dr. Harris had passed around the word that a paper, quite out of the ordinary, would be presented, and that the author, a son of his old friend, Major Leconte, a recent graduate of St. Mary's College was

really of even greater promise than Harris' own pupil, John W. Randall, of seven years before. Thomas Wentworth Higginson was then a beginner. Present also should be Copley Greene, a local collector, who had taken the then unusual trip to Paris, taking all his beetles with him, reveling for weeks in the Dejean collection, comparing and labeling his own, and even exchanging with that prince of amateurs. One easily imagines Leconte, the elder, the Major, still possessing a soldier's bearing. He had begun his visits to Cambridge and Dr. Harris in 1830 and had read before this very society his paper monographing the Histers. He had inveighed eloquently against the carelessness of American describers in not studying sufficiently the earlier authorities and thus burdening the synonymy. As luck would have it, the first six species described in that paper proved synonyms. One would like to imagine the debut of young Leconte as a speaker. An inspection of the minutes, however, of the Boston Society of Natural History of that date shows that it was a very ordinary meeting. Neither Leconte was present. The paper was read "by title" and ordered printed. The gem had no setting.

Before entering upon his detailed descriptions young Leconte wrote:

"The indolence of our entomological observers is the more deplorable, as we are few in number, and therefore more is to be expected from each individual. The field of research is still open, and anyone who travels in it, with even ordinary care and attention, will not fail, under the numerous stones scattered on its surface, and the weeds which apparently obstruct his path, to discover as fine insects as have ever graced the cabinet of a Hope or a Dejean. I trust that the day is past when our insects must be sent to Europe for determination. Are we to be bound by the mere dictum of some European entomologist, of equal indolence with ourselves, who chooses to *name* the insect which we have discovered? Where should our insects be better known than in the country which gave them birth; but in what civilized land are they less studied?

"These remarks may appear rather high-flown to one who is not interested in the subject; but I trust I may be pardoned for this outburst of feeling . . . when I see—what shall I say shiploads?—of our finest insects sent off to Europe, with no authority but a cabinet name, or perhaps not even with that, until some person of more than

ordinary industry, into whose hands they chance to fall, describes them, and acquires great praise for doing that which he ought not to have a chance of doing. Can it be wondered at that there is so much confusion about the synonymy of our species, when they are published in every country of the globe, but that in which they ought to be published?"

The presumptuousness of this interpolation is not what is expected from a youth of nineteen. It is a challenge, the outcome of which can only be ridiculous failure or preëminent success. Neither is the vigorous, trained use of language the usual accompaniment of the student period of life. In our day of too extreme, too early specialization the curriculum of elementals is unduly neglected. Balanced, forceful, faultless English is rare and nowhere rarer than in science.

From the date of his first paper thirty-nine years of life were given to John Lawrence Leconte, four of which were devoted to his country and four more to an invalid wife, eight in all during which entomology occupied only odd hours. When he began there were not five genuine entomologists in the country. The president of the Philadelphia Academy of Sciences wrote in 1842 that "there is not one entomologist in our number." When Leconte finished Philadelphia was the home of the science. Leconte described 4,734 species of beetles, nine times as many as any predecessor. Many dropped into the synonymy, but present research is restoring them constantly, notably among those which he himself suppressed.[1] He, with a pupil, gave to the world a division of the Rhynchophora in which every basic fact was a new discovery. To crown all, in the last year of his life he and that pupil produced a generic classification of the Coleoptera which superseded every European work and which, while out of print, is far from obsolete. Modern science is arriving at its major classification by a different route, but arriving at substantially the same conclusions. Moreover, by Leconte's example and direct influence entomological societies sprang up all over the land. He was a man of enormous power of attraction, few jealousies and fewer enemies.

John Lawrence Leconte was born in New York City, May 13, 1825. The Lecontes were a Hugenot family, as were the Says and Chaudoirs, who contributed immortal names to coleopterology. They

[1] Compare Thos. L. Casey Memoirs IV, p. 220, *sub Brachysomida.*

had prominence and wealth before they were driven from France in the seventeenth century. They lost nothing in the New World, either in the sugar trade in Martinique or in the great family plantation in Liberty County, Georgia, until the latter was despoiled during the Civil War. Their marriages were as a rule with families of prominence. The grandfather of Dr. Leconte married a Miss Eatton, of the family which founded Eattontown, N. J. Hence his father's name, John Eatton Leconte. Major Leconte entered the army from pride, not necessity, and retired long before he was forty. He was thirty-seven when he married Miss Lawrence and settled in New York City. The two first born of this marriage died in infancy. His wife dying, Major Leconte was left to the solaces of a life-long passionate devotion to natural history and the care of his third son, then only a few months old. For thirty years the major lived in New York. Day after day he worked over his beetles with a little toddler on his knee. If environment is to count the youngster was bound to be a coleopterist.

There is in Philadelphia a family of beetle collectors, the grandfather a contemporary of Leconte, the father now owning the best private cabinet in that city, and the son an enthusiast, home several times with the spoils of Texas and the far Southwest. I asked this young man: "Do you remember a time when some common but handsome species here was new to you and the capture of which gave you a thrill—something like a *Prionus laticollis* or the velvet green *Chlœnius sericeus* or the big purple *Dicœlus?*" He shook his head. No, he knew all those species by the time when boys of his age were becoming certain of the sequence of letters in the alphabet. He knew the number of tarsal joints when his fellows were learning to interpret the hands on the clock face. So with young Leconte. He absorbed beetle knowledge with his primer. He mingled new species with long division.

He was graduated from St. Mary's College, Maryland, in 1842, then studied in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, taking his degree of M.D. in 1846. He never practiced prior to 1861. How he got his degree in 1846 is hard to understand. He made a journey to the Far West in 1843. In 1844 he visited Lake Superior, working his way along the entire south shore and crossing the country to the sources of the Mississippi River, and this trip was

soon repeated. In 1845 he went up the Platte River to Fort Laramie, thence to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and back to civilization by the Arkansas River. He followed the Santa Fé trail to New Mexico to turn up once more the insects known only from Say's descriptions of his own types. There was little time left for the study of medicine.

It will be observed that young Dr. Leconte was free from the encumbrance placed upon ninety-nine per cent. of mankind—the necessity of earning his own living. The fact is that two lives, those of father and son, are serial, bound together in a single aim in a way almost unprecedented. Somewhere in George Eliot's works there is described a meeting of an incoming and an outgoing clergyman. The elder observes sadly: "You do not begin where I leave off; you must begin where I began." It was the major's aim that the boy should not begin where the father began. To begin where he left off was not to be hoped for, but many years of hard study could be saved. A man of simple tastes, the major economized that the boy should never lack time and independence. Of scholarly tastes, the major was determined that the boy should have the broadest foundation of general knowledge. With military simplicity the major packed the boy's valise and bade him Godspeed on every journey. When the boy sent back 10,000 beetles in alcohol from San Francisco the major received them at home, mounted them, identified all he could, gazed at all under the lens and jotted down the characters which seemed to be important. All to save time when Johnny came marching home, all to lengthen out the working hours of a human span, all that his own career in the science should be extended and glorified by the second generation.

In 1852 the Lecontes moved to Philadelphia. Thither had come Prof. S. S. Haldeman from Lancaster to the University of Pennsylvania. They would be nearer to Dr. Friederich E. Melsheimer, who had become president of the Entomological Society of Pennsylvania, formed in 1842. The Melsheimer checklist was to be edited and brought to date for the Smithsonian, for which labor of love Haldeman and Leconte had volunteered. There the meetings of the Academy of Sciences grew in numerical strength and dignity. The Entomological Society was formed in 1859 by Cresson, Bland and Ridings. There the major attended the meetings, a little bent from

his earlier carriage, one hand bearing heavily on his cane, the other on the shoulder of his boy. Auguste Sallé visited them in June, 1854, at their house, 321 West Locust St., and was introduced to "le respectable père," then just past seventy. He found there Motschulsky, who had been working for three weeks over identifications, especially of beetles taken on his southern tour. The Leconte collection had then about 7,000 species, arranged, as Sallé remarks, with great care. In the afternoon the quartet walked, first to the Academy of Sciences nearby, at the corner of Broad and Greoge Sts., then through Fairmount Park. In Philadelphia the major reported "adsum" in 1861 and rendered his final accounting. Born in 1784.

Are the pictures of this career to be drawn with more detail? Is it worth while to follow the journeys of the younger man, to learn whom and what he met? Would it be of interest to listen to some letter from Leconte, to Zimmermann in South Carolina, Harris in Cambridge, Schaum in New Jersey, Haldeman in Philadelphia, or Adams in Vermont, telling about a glorious vacation of four weeks on Mt. Yona,[2] Georgia? Would we like to learn more than the bare facts of the ten years when young Leconte was hurrying from Superior to Florida, from Nova Scotia to San Diego, from Coney Island to South Orange, losing 20,000 specimens in the San Francisco fire of 1852, robbed of his horses by the Indians near the Gila River and having to walk to camp thirty miles over the desert, constantly amassing the actual material from which he constituted his classification? What of the collectors who fell under the spell of his influence and gave to him their whole collections, types and all? There are many more of them than appear in the checklist. Of any man who in any pursuit becomes the leading authority the chief biographical data cannot but be well known. Yet the principal events of Leconte's life have never been recorded in any one place. Nothing larger than a sketch of him exists. There is an able essay on his genealogy and a careful estimate of his work compared with that of Dr. Horn, rather favoring the latter. The best collection of facts is in the six-page necrological notice by Sallé in the Annals of the Entomological Society of France. It is remarkable that in all Leconte's published papers he fails to mention being in any place at any date. No personal element whatever, the word "I" almost omitted. There

[2] *Batrisus ionae* Lec. commemorates the spot.

is a wealth of material to be developed some day. Some attic will reveal its treasure of letters. The 2,000 or 3,000 John Abbot drawings known to have been collected by Leconte the elder probably still exist. There are thousands of letters to and from the Lecontes tucked away somewhere waiting for editing. Time flies. There are only a score left out of the thousand who read Dr. Horn's laconic telegram of 1883: "Dr. Leconte died at 1.30 o'clock this afternoon," and there is no tyro in beetledom who does not know the man.

NOTES ON ORTHOPTERA FROM THE EAST COAST OF FLORIDA WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF TWO NEW SPECIES OF BELOCEPHALUS.

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Nearly the entire month of September, 1913, was spent in company with Mr. Charles E. Sleight collecting insects and other natural history objects of interest at several places along the east coast of Florida from Jacksonville to Key West. The writer paid particular attention to the Orthoptera and in all ninety-two species were secured, those from the vicinity of Jacksonville having been turned over to Messrs. Rehn and Hebard, of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, for study in connection with some of their North Florida material. The remaining species collected at La Grange and southward are here recorded, including two new species of *Belocephalus,* and the very interesting *Phrixa maya,* a large green Katydid-like creature, originally described from Mexico, and now reported for the first time from the United States.

Mr. Howard Chaudoin, of La Grange, and the family of Mr. Wm. H. Sands, of Big Pine Key, have sent me specimens collected in the fall of 1913. These have been here mentioned in connection with the various species.

In New York and New Jersey *Chortophaga viridifasciata* may be found as a mature insect from April to September; the species of *Hippiscus* and *Arphia sulphurea* mature in the spring and die by the